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Guidance Governing Disclosures of Classified Intelligence

As pointed out in the President's Directive of December 21, 1970, subject "Disclosures of Classified Information and Coordination and Clearance of Official Statements", machinery now exists to protect all classified information. It is evident that unauthorized disclosures of classified intelligence involve either careless or deliberate failure to comply with regulations and procedures already in effect. Further, with respect to sources and methods, widespread discussion of this subject, some of it unavoidable but much of it gratuitous, seems to have conveyed an impression in some parts of the Government that there is little, if anything, that is not known to the public. Nothing could be further from the truth. The protection of intelligence sources and methods continues to be of vital importance to our intelligence effort. The true origin of many categories of intelligence information to be used in public release or debate must be disguised and the use of all such information must be duly authorized. The responsibility for authorizing release and for devising proper disguise rests with the originating agency.

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Chiefs of all components of the intelligence community should review the existing regulations and impress on all concerned the necessity to abide by them. The following specific actions should be taken:

1. Review existing departmental and agency regulations governing the control of classified information to make sure that in every instance they meet the criteria required by the steadily increasing volume and significance of classified intelligence,

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particularly including sensitive compartmented intelligence.

Particular emphasis should be placed on assuring that the need-to-know principle is strictly enforced.

2. Make sure that briefing and indoctrination procedures are reviewed with the objectives of paragraph 1 above in view. These procedures should be so designed as to assure that newly indoctrinated members of the intelligence community and other newly indoctrinated officials of the Government fully understand the differences which exist among various kinds of intelligence, with respect to danger to the source ^{OK METHOD} which would result from disclosure. It should also be the purpose of these procedures to explain the way in which cleared individuals can readily ascertain the clearance status of others before discussing classified information with them, and to make sure that they do so.

3. Provide for periodic reindoctrination and continuing education in security practices and procedures, to include a program for prompt debriefing of individuals who no longer have a need-to-know.

4. Review procedures for authorizing and controlling disclosures and releases.

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a. The responsibility of the intelligence chief for assessing the risk to intelligence sources and methods involved in deliberate disclosures should be delineated. Assessments should include methods by which such intelligence can be effectively and plausibly sanitized by or with the approval of the originating agency so as to protect the source. There should be provisions for a review by intelligence authorities of any classified intelligence proposed for declassification or for use in briefings, testimony, symposiums, seminars, speeches, writings for publication, presentations, courses of instruction, press releases, formal and informal interviews with press representatives, or other activities in the course of which there is a danger that intelligence sources and methods might be revealed. Sensitive intelligence to be disclosed should be clearly identified as such and the official disclosing it should be so cautioned when appropriate. This can be particularly important in dealing with public information officials who cannot be expected to be fully familiar with the origins of sensitive information. Records should be maintained regarding any classified intelligence declassified or authorized for disclosure.

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b. The facts surrounding inadvertent disclosure of classified intelligence to any person or persons not authorized for access to such intelligence should be reported to the appropriate intelligence chief, who will inform the originating agency in any potentially harmful case.

c. Any person having knowledge of any disclosure of classified intelligence made contrary to the regulations and controls of the department or agency concerned should promptly report it to the appropriate intelligence chief for action. Such action may include (1) such steps as are feasible to repair or limit the extent of the damage; (2) a request for investigation by appropriate authorities; (3) an assessment of the possible harm to intelligence sources and methods and notification to all intelligence authorities concerned; and (4) prompt notification to all official recipients that an unauthorized disclosure has occurred, together with advice of remedial action to be taken and guidance for responses to inquiries from public media representatives that may result from the compromise.

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5. Take fully into account the interests of any other members of the intelligence community who might be concerned, in proposing the release of any intelligence derived from a joint project in the intelligence community. If a department or agency authorizes the disclosure of sensitive intelligence from such a source, that agency is responsible for informing other USIB members of the action. Special attention should be given to defining the precise limits of the disclosure and to cautioning against inadvertent elaboration or extension beyond those limits.

6. Take disciplinary action where appropriate, in a just, clear, and definite manner which will demonstrate the extreme seriousness with which unauthorized disclosures are viewed.

Insert 3 - Draft (5 January 1971) ~~Agreed~~ Guidance Governing Disclosures
of Classified Intelligence - New second unnumbered paragraph

~~A~~ The President's Directive of December 21, 1970, refers to the statutory responsibility of the Director of Central Intelligence for the protection of intelligence sources and methods. The statute specifically provides:

And provided further, That the Director of Central Intelligence shall be responsible for protecting intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure;

This is a unique statutory responsibility and recognizes ^{that} protection of intelligence sources and methods is a professional intelligence matter. It is not to be expected that all consumers of intelligence, policy makers and others would recognize or be fully alert to potential danger to intelligence sources and methods resulting from release of intelligence. Consequently, it is believed that the intelligence community should take the leading role within their departments and agencies.